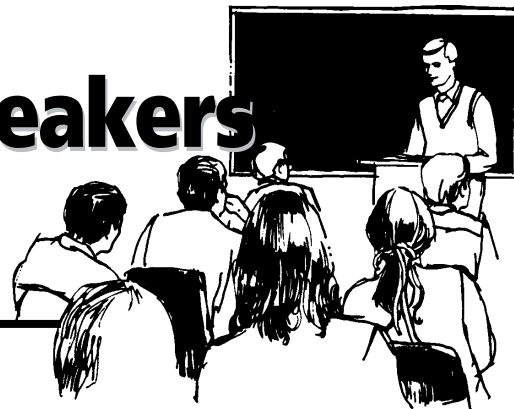


Tips for 4-H Public Speakers

Planning, Writing and Presenting



Your Speech - Why?

- It will help you: plan and organize your thoughts for presentation to others
- Gain self-confidence before a group
- Gain valuable leadership and self-discipline skills
- Understand skills in researching a topic and presenting it in a convincing manner
- Develop a pleasing personal manner and an effective delivery system
- Become an active citizen and an effective community leader who can teach and inspire others
- Become more effective at many of life's tasks.

Prepare Well!

Select a topic you are interested in, know something about, or are willing to research. The topic may be related to your 4-H activity or it may be concerned with a major social issue. It should be one in which your audience will be interested and about which you can enlighten them.

In developing your speech, focus on a main idea or theme. Build your speech around this focal point. Do not try to cover a topic that is too broad.

Do Some Research

Rap with yourself and write down every thought that comes to mind concerning the topic you chose.

Organize your speech from these thoughts. Draw on your own experiences. Be sure you are up-to-date regarding the information you plan to present.

Getting Organized

The three main parts of any good speech are an *Introduction*, a *Body* and a *Conclusion*.

Introduction

Attract the audience's attention with a quotation, poem, or a startling question or statement of fact. Those first few words count! Spark your listeners' interest and they will stay with you throughout your presentation. State the purpose of your speech and what you hope to accomplish.

Body

This is the "meat" of your talk. You can present information in several ways to your audience. You might like to try one or more of the following patterns:

- The time pattern – arrange your talk historically around the past, present, and future.
- The space sequence – arrange your talk geographically. For example, you might be interested in water pollution. You could trace it from its source as it moves downstream.
- The problem-effect-solution – very effective in speeches because *your* experiences tend to fall in these categories. For example, the oven was too hot, the biscuits burned, so the biscuits were fed to the birds. State the problem, describe its effects, and suggest ways to solve it.
- The narrative sequence – in simple terms, just tell your story from beginning to end.

Remember, it's your story, so be sure to put yourself into it. Personal experiences add a lot.

Conclusion

As you close, briefly summarize your main points and appeal for specific action (if that is the intent of your speech). This is your final opportunity to reach your audience, so make it count!

Here are a few tips for ending your speech:

- Never talk about stopping. Just stop!
- Always stop while your audience still wants you to continue.
- Close with the idea you most want the audience to remember.
- One effective way to end is to summarize the main points. Another method is to leave your audience laughing or smiling.

Let's Write

Every speaker uses some type of written format for a speech. The most common questions are: Should I write out my entire speech and try to memorize it? Should I use an outline of my most important points? Should I just read my speech?

Professional speakers use all of these techniques. Each has its good points and each has certain disadvantages. Ideally, you should know your subject well enough so that you don't need notes, yet not have it memorized. Memorizing a speech is like building a fence around yourself because, often, all you know about your topic is what you have learned by memory. Try various techniques and select the best method for you.

Some speakers use a complete outline. If you do this, write some subpoints under each main point. Indicate under each heading which facts or examples you will use. Outline your introduction and conclusion in the same way.

Other speakers prefer to organize their thoughts, but find that they can best choose their words when they are actually speaking. So, they start with an outline and talk it through many times, trying out different ways of developing the ideas.

Practice your speech at home before your family and friends. It is usually a good idea to practice in front of a mirror so that you can see your expressions and mannerisms, and whether they add or detract from your speech. Then when you are ready for the public, your 4-H Club meeting is a good place to start.

Ready for Delivery

There is no "right" or "best" way to speak, except to be yourself and to show you are interested in your topic. It is only when you are natural that you communicate your real self—and all speeches need the "personality" that only *you* can give to yours.

These suggestions might help:

- Get plenty of rest before you meet your audience. Don't eat much before you speak. This can keep the "butterflies" in your stomach from bothering you.
- If you are nervous, breathe deeply and slowly several times just before you are introduced. Relax your arms, legs and body as much as possible.
- When you are introduced, walk briskly to the lectern, smile and give the audience the impression that you are glad to be there.
- Stand tall. Don't lean on a table, podium or lectern.
- Be confident from the beginning. First impressions are important. Speak loud enough to be heard.
- Use gestures only when they are natural to you. If you normally use your hands when you talk, use them when you give a speech.
- Look at your audience as much as possible. Glance around the room so that all of your audience feels that you have seen them some time during the talk. Don't just "scan" your audience. Rather, pause a few seconds and talk to one person, then move to another.

Where will I speak?

Spreading the 4-H message is one of your most important assignments as a speaker. You might give your speech in school, to your project group, before a local 4-H club, in a public speaking contest, or to a local organization. Many service clubs and community groups welcome 4-H speakers. When you appear before such groups, remember not only to give your speech, but also to thank them for inviting you.

In West Virginia, 4-H conducts a county public speaking contest. The winners go on to the state contest, usually held at Jackson's Mill in conjunction with the State Visual Presentations Contest.

There are two divisions: Junior and Senior. Regulations for each follow. Please note the points the judges use to score. This should be most helpful as you have others evaluate your talk.

A. Public Speaking Contest

Senior Division:

1. The individual must be a 4-H member and must be at least 14 years of age on or before Dec. 31, of the year preceding the contest.
2. The senior division high-scoring individual in each county contest will be eligible to participate in the state contest. Each county winner must submit a National 4-H Report Form to the state 4-H office. The National 4-H Report Form score and the speech score will each count 50 percent toward determining the Class I state winner. See item 11 for description on non-national awards class. Contestants must enter in either Class I or Class II.
3. Each county may enter one contestant in the state contest.
4. The time limit is *five to seven minutes*. One point will be deducted for each minute under or over the specific time.
5. Talks must be original.
6. Judges will have the opportunity to ask one or more questions related to the speech's subject matter. The question period for each contestant should not exceed three minutes, and is separate and apart from the time allotted for the speech.
7. 4-H members participating in the state public speaking contest (National Awards Section) must have completed a minimum of three years' 4-H membership.
8. 4-H members who have attended National 4-H Congress are not eligible to participate in the National Awards Section of the public speaking contest.
9. First place winners in senior division state 4-H public speaking contests are not eligible to participate again.
10. The public speaking judge's score sheet (4-H-904-90) can be ordered from the West Virginia University mailroom.

11. There will be two classes available in senior public speaking.

Class I requires the submission of the National 4-H Report Form. *The winner (who will receive a trip to the National 4-H Congress) will be determined by the total score on the National 4-H Report Form (50 percent) and the speech (50 percent).*

Class II will not require a National 4-H Report Form. The winner will be chosen on the score of the speech only. *No trip to National 4-H Congress is awarded in this class.*

Contestants must choose either Class I or Class II. Counties may send only one senior contestant to the State Public Speaking Contest.

B. Public Speaking Contest

Junior Division:

1. The individual must be a 4-H member and must not reach his/her 14th birthday on or before Dec. 31, of the year preceding the contest.
 2. Each county may enter one contestant in the state contest.
 3. Time limit is three to five minutes. One point per minute will be deducted for going over or under the specified time.
 4. Talks must be original.
 5. Judges will have the opportunity to ask one or more questions that relate to the subject matter in the speech. The question period for each contest should not exceed three minutes. The question period is not counted as part of the speech time.
 6. The high-scoring individual in the Junior Division in each county contest will be eligible to participate in the state contest.
 7. First place winners in previous Junior Division State 4-H Public Speaking Contests, are not eligible to participate again in the Junior Division.
 8. Posters or other visual cards are not to be used - (small note cards are permitted.)
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Compiled by Win Merriam, Jr., Extension Specialist 4-H – WVU

Sources of Reference:

“Public Speaking” - 4-H Manual, Washington State University

“Speak Up” - Penn State University, State College, Pa.

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